

IGNITION 15

VICTOR ARROYO

PAULE GILBERT

MARIE-CLAUDE LEPIEZ

WAN YI LEUNG

KYLE ALDEN MARTENS

LAUREN PELC-MCARTHUR

KARA SKYLLING

SANAZ SOHRABI

SWAPNA TAMHANE

CURATORS: NICOLE BURISCH AND

MICHÈLE THÉRIAULT



APRIL 24 – MAY 25, 2019



Wan Yi Leung, *Action Follows*, 2018. Video still. Courtesy of the artist.

WAYS OF THINKING

Ways of Thinking is designed for anyone interested in exploring contemporary art and its exhibition framework. It succinctly synthesizes information on the exhibition's concept, the artists and the works featured. For the complete version of *Ways of Thinking*, please see our website: <http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/ways-of-thinking/current/?lang=en>

IGNITION is an annual exhibition that features new work by students currently enrolled in the Studio Arts or Humanities graduate programs at Concordia University. It provides an up and coming generation of artists with a unique opportunity to present ambitious, interdisciplinary works in the professional context of a gallery with a national and international profile. Graduate students work directly with Gallery staff to produce an exhibition that places an emphasis on critical, innovative, and experimental work, engaging in the exploration and consideration of diverse media and practices. **IGNITION** is of interest to all students and faculty, the art community, and the general public.

Projects selected by Nicole Burisch and Michèle Thériault

Nicole Burisch is Assistant Curator, Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Canada.

To bar. To cross. To circumscribe. These are terms that might first ring of prohibition, interruption, or restriction. Yet, they also characterize a set of generative processes and concerns shared by the nine artists in **IGNITION 15**. In their hands, they signal sensibilities departing from a standpoint of tight and intimate proximity, from where to examine the multitude of lines outlining and intersecting an analysis of self, histories, and environments.

Installing her work behind the Gallery's main window, **Swapnaa Tamhane** examines how display might magnify value or serve as a lens for inquiry. Painting on a joint compound support grafted to the wall, **Kara Skylling** drafts geometric systems in dialogue with the surrounding architecture. This is painting against the gallery, if against is understood as being in close physical contact with. **Kyle Alden Martens**'s *Soft Players* documents a trio—possibly the titular soft players—engaged in a subdued game that's more of an interface than a competition. Resulting from arrangements made on-line with men, **Wan Yi Leung**'s videos invite questions into the limits of negotiation and collaboration, public and private, and economies of exchange. Starting with an act of minor iconoclasm, **Marie-Claude Lepiez** commandeers a scene of Victorian friendship and steers it head-on towards queer punk solidarity. **Sanaz Sohrabi** adopts anatomy as an analytic method to consider images of bodies in assembly. Through editing and commentary, she makes precise incisions across historical lines leaving the body politic to spill between frames. **Paule Gilbert**'s on-site performance works within the imaginary space of a projected grid where Gilbert slips into the narrow border between the wall and light to improvise with a set of sculptural objects. **Victor Arroyo** telescopes fantasies of colonial governance and land disposition under the steady eye of a surveillance camera, accenting its duplicitous capacity to project culpability as much as it keeps watch for it. And addressing the hasty collection and consumption of art through social media, **Lauren Pelc-McArthur** builds the textures of her paintings up to a noisy physicality and opticality that demands viewing in person and skirts easy capture by the camera.

VICTOR ARROYO

Portrait of a Nation, 2019
Video, colour, sound, 22 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Support: El Colegio De Michoacan, Mexico; Mitacs, Canada; Canada Council for the Arts; Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, Québec

With *Portrait of a Nation* I examine nineteenth-century Mexican painter José María Velasco's pastoral landscapes as instruments of surveillance and colonial violence. Using a surveillance camera and working in collaboration with Indigenous P'urhépecha participants in Mexico, I re-photograph and re-stage Velasco's landscape paintings, situating videotape and the landscape genre as mutual technologies of violence and addressing the complexities of the political geography of race in Mexico.

EXPLORE

- Colonial data. Consider the amount of visual information needed to surveil a scene compared to reproducing it.
- Sound and environment. Do the field recordings change how you view the paintings and re-stagings?

PAULE GILBERT

Untitled, 2019
Performance on April 24th with painted wood objects, charcoal and paper

Untitled, 2019
Stop motion animation, 2 min. 28 sec.
Courtesy of the artist

During this performance I open myself to the limits of equilibrium and vulnerability through a series of improvised and sincere gestures in dialogue with forms that act at once as supports, obstacles and records of action. This work emerges from a reflection on the grid, Western symbol for order and reason, which I have appropriated so to challenge and transform it. The image-by-image animation of my paper threads bears witness to this.

EXPLORE

- The body as drawing instrument. How does Gilbert use surface and light to work with visible and intangible forms of mark making?
- The grid. Do you see the grid as an aesthetic or practical tool? As a barrier or support? For its parts or as a whole?

MARIE-CLAUDE LEPIEZ

I want to scream because no matter how much I scream, no one will listen, 2019
Plinth, wood, acrylic, found objects (aluminum wheels, bicycle air chamber, butcher twine, clamp, motor, electrical wires, papier-mâché, human hair, porcelain)
157.48 x 66.04 x 66.04 cm

Courtesy of the artist

I want to scream because no matter how much I scream, no one will listen builds off of a quote from Sara Marcus, author of *Girls to the Front* that retraces the history of Riot Grrrl. This sculpture honours this 90s queer punk feminist movement, a sort of 3D zine extolling anti-consumerism and women's emancipation.

EXPLORE

- Revolt. What is the force behind rebellion?
- Empowerment. Consider the literal act of breaking the mold. How does it prepare the ground for other forms of representation?

WAN YI LEUNG

Action Follows, 2018
Video, colour, sound, 7 min. 12 sec. and leotard

Courtesy of the artist

My project *Action Follows* depicts the interchange of power dynamics, youth, sexuality, morality in relationships. I met Joe online. He is twenty-seven years older than me. The video was created during consensual arrangements of me beating him three times a week for three months. Joe requested subdued lighting in the video because he did not want himself or his home to be recognized.

EXPLORE

- Control and vulnerability. How is control distributed between the participants? How is vulnerability exposed or maintained?
- Public and private. What is the status of the video in the Gallery? Has it entered an art context or does it draw the Gallery into the original arrangement?

KYLE ALDEN MARTENS

Soft Players, 2016
Installation with ceramics, flocked fibres, rope, foam, boot liners, Video, colour, sound, 10 min.

Courtesy of the artist

This work concerns digital and physical interactions, coupling, solitude, and cruising. Influenced by video and board games, the performers shift between people, players, and avatars in search of intimate interaction within a coded set of rules. There is a strong blur between innuendo and innocence, game and function.

EXPLORE

- Gentleness. How do you play soft?
- Goal. What is the intent of the game? How are the players equipped for reception?

LAUREN PELC-MCARTHUR

From left to right
DuoSifter Snap, 2019
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Liquidation Strategy to Official Space, 2019
Acrylic and oil on canvas

Sprite Riot, 2019
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Think, Simpson, Think, 2019
Acrylic and oil on canvas

152.4 x 101.6 cm each

Courtesy of the artist

In my latest paintings, visual overload, sci-fi tropes, and psychedelic flotsam and jetsam are all mediated through screen aesthetics to build imagined spaces in states of flux. Populated with cyclical imagery and allusions to humanoid forms, these spaces serve as playing fields to explore the potential for creation and annihilation amid technological and organic interconnectivity.

EXPLORE

- Interface. How does Pelc-McArthur craft a digital experience on a physical surface?
- Organisms. Plant-like forms are a recurring motif in the paintings. Consider the different ways they are composed. Which techniques make them appear more organic or synthetic?

KARA SKYLLING

Wall Drawing (Parallel Planes), 2019
Egg tempera on joint compound on gallery wall
152.4 x 23.62 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Wall Drawing (Parallel Planes) sits directly on the gallery wall on a layer of joint compound, at once mirroring the wall's plane and depending on its surrounding structure. By drawing focus to the negative space of the work's surface, I aim to guide the viewer's attention toward the space behind the facing wall's surface and the surrounding walls. The drawing is segmented to allow it to exist individually and as part of a greater, connected system.

EXPLORE

- Composition. Think about the decisions made in line, pattern, and colour. What sort of rhythms do they create?
- Alteration. Compare the work to the built environment. What elements of the Gallery's architecture become present in this dialogue?

SANAZ SOHRABI

Notes on Seeing Double, 2018
Video, colour, sound, 11 min. 10 sec.

Courtesy of the artist

What is the anatomy of a revolution? Masses of bodies with a collective desire? In the visual-essay *Notes on Seeing Double*, I take the Farsi figure of speech "temsaal" as my point of departure in considering this question. At the threshold of seeing and remembering, the work unpacks the entanglements between pre-existing images, language, and memory in different processes of visualization.

EXPLORE

- Translation. How do you translate between images? How do you translate between language and images? How do you translate between memories and images?
- Framework. Analyze the ways in which bodies are framed. How is framing political? What can this tell us about the conditions of image making?

SWAPNA TAMHANE

BIBLIOTHEK, 2019

From left to right

The table that didn't know its own future, 2018-2019
Chalk pastel on plywood, MDF
Variable dimensions

Supports for Unnecessary Ornamentation (made by Achim Hirzes, Exhibition Technician at Städtisches Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach), 2015
29 x 43.5 cm

Past, 1982 (Photograph by Ruth Kaiser. Courtesy Städtisches Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach)
11.3 x 16 cm

Present past, 2013
11.43 x 14.45 cm

A Sign of Relief, 2017
266.24 x 142.24 cm

Lexicon, 2018
60 x 86 cm

Digital inkjet prints

Courtesy of the artist

The installation *BIBLIOTHEK* includes prints, a collage, and a tabletop recreated through my body's memory, the original in the library of the Hans Hollein-designed Museum Abteiberg. I often think of this table unaware of its future: that one day it would host a woman from the South Asian diaspora via Canada to tell a story about global feminisms, or that it would be occupied by an ugly beige-grey computer. The day my contract at the museum ended the table was returned to its former self—it breathed a sigh of relief.

EXPLORE

- Counter-narrative. How does the body remember? How is this memory accessed? Does the body remember outside the dominant narrative?
- Display. How does viewing the installation behind a window and outside of the Gallery influence your understanding of the work? Are you drawn to see the objects and images as documents, artefacts, or commodities?

